

Message Text

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ACTION EA-06

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INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY TIKYO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
CINCPAC HONOLULU

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LIMDIS

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

EO 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PEPR, ETRD, LA, TH, CB
SUBJ: FONMIN UPPADIT VISIT TO LAOS

REF: A. BANGKOK 14491 B. BANGKOK 15321

SUMMARY:. DURING A VISIT MAY 31-JUNE 2 BY FONMIN UPPADIT TO VIENTIANE TO SIGN TRADE AND TRANSIT AGREEMENTS, THAI OFFICIALS WERE IMPRESSED BY THE FORTHCOMING ATTITUDE OF THE LAOTIANS. THE LAO INDICATED THAT THEY WISHED TO CULTIVATE ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH THAILAND, SUGGESTING THAT THEY WERE SOMEWHAT UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THEIR DEPENDENCE ON VIET-NAM. IN PRIVATE, THEY WERE CAUTIOUSLY CRITICAL OF HANOI. THE LAOTIANS EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT
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TENSIONS BETWEEN THE PRC AND SRV AND THE VIET-CAMBODIAN CONFLICT. FONMIN UPPADIT ALSO MET WITH CAMBODIAN AMBASSADOR SAM SAN. PAST POSITIONS WERE REITERATED. A VISIT TO BANGKOK BY DEPUTY PM IENG SARY IS STILL INDEFINITE. END SUMMARY.

1. MFA UNDERSECRETARY ARUN PROVIDED DCM JUNE 6 WITH

FOLLOWING DESCRIPTION OF THE VISIT MAY 31-JUNE 2 BY FONMIN UPPADIT TO LAOS. UPPADIT SIGNED BOTH FRAMEWORK TRADE AND TRANSIT AGREEMENTS WITH DEPUTY PM AND FONMIN PHOUN SIPASEUT. THE TRANSIT AGREEMENT, MODELED AFTER THE BARCELONA CONVENTION OF 1921 AND THE 1959 AGREEMENT BETWEEN LAOS AND THAILAND, COVERS FACILITIES PROVIDED EACH COUNTRY, FAIR CHARGES, AND SPEEDY TRANSIT. CONTRARY TO THE IMPRESSION UPPADIT GAVE THE PRESS BEFORE HIS TRIP (REF B), THE RTG HAS NOT YET AGREED TO OPEN FIVE ADDITIONAL TRANSIT POINTS, AS REQUESTED BY VIENTIANE. ARUN TOLD US THAT THE NSC HAS CONSIDERED THE POSSIBILITY. HE INDICATED THE RTG HAS NO OBJECTION IN PRINCIPLE TO OPENING ADDITIONAL POINTS, WHICH BANGKOK MAY DO AS A POLITICAL GESTURE OF FRIENDSHIP. HE NOTED THAT THE LAOTIAN SIDE INSISTED ON LANGUAGE IN THE AGREEMENTS STRESSING THE "BROTHERLY AND FRIENDLY RELATIONS" BETWEEN THAILAND AND LAOS.

2. UPPADIT ALSO DELIVERED A LETTER FROM PM KRIANGSAK TO PM KAYSONE, WHO WAS UNAVAILABLE TO RECEIVE THE MESSAGE PERSONALLY. UPPADIT REQUESTED THAT LAO AUTHORITIES BRING "PROMPT JUSTICE" TO THAI HELD IN LAOTIAN CUSTODY. THE LAOTIANS APPARENTLY PROMISED TO GIVE SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE MATTER.

3. UPPADIT CONFERRED WITH DEPUTY PM PHOUN AND ALSO WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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DEPUTY PM NOUHAK PHOUMSAVAN. BOTH SIDES EMPHASIZED THE DESIRE TO IMPROVE BILATERAL RELATIONS. ARUN, WHO SPENT A WEEK IN VIENTIANE PREPARING FOR THE VISIT BY THE FONMIN, DESCRIBED THE LAOTIANS AS "VERY FORTHCOMING". THE LAOTIANS DENIGRATED THE "CANBODIAN MODEL", SUGGESTING THAT THE POLICIES IN PHNOM PENH ARE TOO EXTREMUM. THEY WERE DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT VIET-NAM-PRC TENSIONS AS WELL AS THE VIET-NAM-CANBODIAN CONFLICT. ARUN ALSO DETECTED THAT NATIONALIST SENTIMENTS WERE MORE VISIBLE, WITH INDIVIDUAL LAO FIGURES PRIVATELY EXPRESSING CONCERN OVER THE EXTENSIVE INFLUENCE OF THE RUSSIANS AND VIETNAMESE IN LAOS AND, AS WELL, THEIR WISH TO ESTABLISH SOME BREATHING ROOM BETWEEN VIENTIANE AND HANOI. IN THIS CONTEXT, ARUN SAID THAT THAILAND FOUND IT DESIRABLE TO TRY TO PROVIDE "ADVANTAGES" TO VIENTIANE AND FACILITATE INCREASED TIES BETWEEN THAILAND AND LAOS. ARUN COMMENTED THAT HE "SENSED" THAT, IN THE RULING CIRCLES IN VIENTIANE, NOUHAK IS MORE WIDELY RESPECTED THAN PRIME MINISTER KAYSONE.

4. LAO STRESSED TO ARUN PRIVATELY THAT THEY HOPED TO DEVELOP CLOSER ECONOMIC TIES WITH THE RTG TO DEVELOP SOME

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT. THE LAO EXPRESSED WORRY ABOUT BEING COMPLETELY DEPENDENT ON VIET-NAM ECONOMICALLY SINCE TRADE WITH VIET-NAM WAS CARRIED OUT AT CLEAR DISADVANTAGES TO LAOS. LAO OFFICIALS ALSO SAID THEY WERE FEARFUL OF DEALING WITH JAPANESE, WHO HAVE SHOWN INTEREST IN HELPING DEVELOP IRON AND TIMBER INDUSTRIES IN LAOS. ACCORDING TO ARUN, JAPANESE INTERESTS HAVE PROPOSED TO THE LPDR ASSISTANCE IN BUILDING A RAIL LINE TO DANANG IN EXCHANGE FOR A THREE YEAR AGREEMENT FOR EXPLOITATION OF TIMBER AND IRON ORE. THE LAO SAID THAT THEY FELT UNABLE TO COPE EITHER WITH THE JAPANESE OR VIETNAMESE AND CONSEQUENTLY HOPED THAT THE RTG WOULD INCREASE ITS ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LPDR TO GIVE THE LAO SOME LATITUDE.

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5. IN PRIVATE TALK, ARUN SAID LAO OFFICIALS WERE SIGNIFICANTLY FRANKER THAN IN EARLIER MEETINGS MOST PARTICULARLY THEIR LATE MARCH VISIT TO BANGKOK. ACCORDING TO ARUN, DURING THE BANGKOK VISIT THE LAO GROUP CAREFULLY FOLLOWED A PRO-VIET-NAM LINE. IN VIENTIANE, DURING HIS EARLIER TRIP WITH COMMERCE VICE MINISTER PROK AS WELL AS IN THE LATEST NEGOTIATIONS, THE LAO OFFICIALS HARDLY MENTIONED VIET-NAM EXCEPT IN A CAUTIOUSLY CRITICAL FASHION. HE SAID THAT LAO OFFICIALS CONFIDED TO HIM THAT VIET-NAM HAD DIVERTED AID MATERIAL PROVIDED BY THE PRC TO VIETNAM.

6. ASKED ABOUT THE PROSPECTIVE WITHDRAWAL OF CHINESE ROAD-BUILDING CREWS FROM NORTHERN LAOS, ARUN COMMENTED THAT, BECAUSE OF DETERIORATING SINO-VIETNAMESE RELATIONS, HE DOUBTS THAT PEKING WILL BE WILLING TO LEAVE NORTHERN LAOS. ARUN NOTED THAT THAI BUDDHIST MONKS CIRCULATE WIDELY IN LAOS. HE UNDERSTANDS THAT ACCORDING TO INFORMATION FROM THESE MONKS VIET-NAM FORCES ARE MOST UNPOPULAR AND THAT THERE HAVE BEEN ATTACKS ON VIET-NAM MILITARY IN SOUTHERN LAOS. ARUN SAID THAT LAO ARE VERY UNCERTAIN OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHINESE AND IN FACT ASKED THE THAI WHETHER THEY COULD PLAY AN INTERMEDIARY ROLE. ARUN FOUND THIS SIGNIFICANT AS A MEASURE OF THE CURRENT DISTANCE BETWEEN PEKING AND VIENTIANE BUT LAUGHINGLY NOTED THAT HE DOUBTED THAT THE CHINESE WOULD BE VERY INTERESTED IN THE THAI AS AN INTERMEDIARY.

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LIMDIS

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

7. UPPADIT ALSO MET WITH CAMBODIAN AMBASSADOR TO LAOS SAM SAN. SEPARATELY, AN MFA SE ASIAN DIVISION OFFICIAL INFORMED US THAT UPPADIT REITERATED TO SAM SAN THE RTG DESIRE TO WORK TO IMPROVE BILATERAL RELATIONS. HE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE THAI PEOPLE COULD NOT TOLERATE THE CONTINUATION OF THE ATTACKS ON THE BORDER AND THAT THE RTG WOULD ACT FIRMLY TO PROTECT THAI INTERESTS. AT THE SAME TIME, THE RTG WOULD MOVE AGGRESSIVELY TO SUPPRESS THE ACTIVITIES OF "THE THIRD HAND" AND SOUGHT RECIPROCAL ACTION FROM PHNOM PENH. UPPADIT EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT DEPUTY PM IENG SARY WOULD VISIT BANGKOK SOON AND INQUIRED ABOUT THE PROSPECTS.

8. SAM SAN RESPONDED, ACCORDING TO THE MFA OFFICIAL,
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THAT PHNOM PENH ALSO WISHED TO IMPROVE TIES WITH THAILAND. HE EXPRESSED THE PERSONAL HOPE THAT BORDER CONFLICT COULD BE REDUCED AND COMMENTED TO UPPADIT THAT "MOST KHMER SOLDIERS, FORMERLY ON THE THAI BORDER, HAVE BEEN MOVED TO THE VIETNAMESE BORDER."

HE NOTED THAT IENG SARY IS CURRENTLY ATTENDING THE UN SPECIAL SESSION ON DISARMAMENT IN NEW YORK AND WAS VAGUE ABOUT THE PROSPECTS OF A VISIT TO THAILAND. SAM SAN PROMISED TO PASS TO PHNOM PENH THE POINTS MADE BY UPPADIT.

9. ARUN WAS LESS SPECIFIC IN HIS COMMENTS ABOUT UPPADIT'S MEETING WITH THE CAMBODIAN AMBASSADOR. ACCORDING TO ARUN, THERE WAS NO SUBSTANTIVE DIALOGUE. AMBASSADOR SAM SAN SIMPLY NOTED POINTS MADE BY UPPADIT AND REITERATED A FEW STANDARD FORMULATIONS PREVIOUSLY USED BY CAMBODIANS. ACCORDING TO ARUN, IN RESPONSE TO UPPADIT'S QUERY REGARDING A IENG SARY VISIT, SAM SAN SIMPLY POINTED OUT THAT IENG SARY WOULD BE OUT OF CAMBODIA UNTIL THE END OF JUNE AND THAT ANY VISIT WOULD HAVE TO BE AFTER THAT DATE. IN REFERRING TO BORDER INCIDENTS, ARUN SAID SAM SAN REITERATED A STATEMENT MADE EARLIER IN A MESSAGE FROM POL POT TO KRIANGSAK THAT THE INCIDENTS ON THE "NORTHERN BORDER" DID NOT INVOLVE KHMER FORCES. ACCORDING TO ARUN, THE IMPLICATION WAS QUITE CLEAR THAT THE STATEMENT OF ALLEGED NON-INVOLVEMENT DID NOT APPLY TO THE SITUATION IN ARANYAPRATHET AREA. ALL IN ALL, ARUN THOUGHT LITTLE WAS ACCOMPLISHED IN THE MEETING ASIDE FROM KEEPING LINES OF COMMUNICATION OPEN BETWEEN THE RTG AND PHNOM PENH.

10. IN GENERAL, SUMMING UP THE STATE OF THAI-LPDR RELATIONS, ARUN SAID THAT THE RTG IS PLEASED BY THE CURRENT CHANGE IN LAO ATTITUDES. WHILE NOT READING TOO MUCH INTO THE SITUATION, ARUN SAID THAT THAIS ARE WILLING TO MAKE SOME CONFIDENTIAL

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LIMITED GESTURES IN THE ECONOMIC FIELD AND WAIT TO SEE WHETHER THE LPDR RESPONDS. HE SAID THAT THE RTG INTENDS TO IMPLEMENT ECONOMIC AND TRANSIT AGREEMENTS FAITHFULLY, FOR THE NEAR TERM, AND TO LOOK INTO ACCOMMODATIONS IN OTHER AREAS (E.G. LOWERING CERTAIN UNREASONABLY HIGH TRANSPORTATION RATES.) ON THE OTHER HAND, ARUN SAID THAT THE RTG WILL LOOK FOR EARLY RECIPROCAL GESTURES BY THE LPDR SHOWING THAT THEY ARE WILLING TO TAKE AT LEAST SOME MINOR STEPS IN MEETING RTG CONCERNS, PARTICULARLY REGARDING SUPPORT OF THE THAI INSURGENCY. HE NOTED THAT THE RTG IS REALISTIC ABOUT CONSTRAINTS UNDER WHICH THE LPDR LEADERSHIP MUST WORK, BUT IF THERE ARE NO RECIPROCAL BENEFITS FOR THE RTG, BANGKOK WOULD BE READY TO TIGHTEN THE SCREWS AGAIN.

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